NEWS RELEASE

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WNY AGING SERVICES PROVIDERS AWARDED FEDERAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

EC Department of Senior Services, Niagara County Office for the Aging to Create Learning Collaborative, Strengthen Partnerships for Integrated Health Care

ERIE COUNTY, NY— The Erie County Department of Senior Services, along with the Niagara County Office for the Aging, have been selected to receive federal technical assistance to help build the business capacity of their aging services network. The goal of the project, which is being led by the Administration for Community Living ("ACL"), is to help community-based organizations build their capacity to more effectively partner with area health care providers to deliver high-quality, integrated care to Western New York seniors.

The Affordable Care Act encourages enhanced integration between hospitals, insurers, health care providers and the community-based organizations that often provide day-to-day support to older adults and people with disabilities. The focus on integration is driven by the belief that health care costs can be reduced by providing more complete patient care that takes into account an individual's social needs as well as their medical needs. For the first time, professionals in the health care community are thinking about supportive services such as care transition counseling, home-delivered meals, and transportation as evidence mounts that services such as these help reduce both hospital readmissions and the likelihood of nursing home placement, as well as other high-cost health care usage. The technical assistance provided by ACL will help community-based organizations build skills and align service capabilities in order to develop new business relationships with healthcare entities that do not typically provide community-based long-term services and supports.

"As I said in my recent '<u>Initiatives for a Smart Economy</u>' address, meaningful and productive partnerships are the key to strengthening our community across all sectors. They are essential to developing efficient and equitable ways to move forward together in a number of areas," **said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz.** "Erie County is pleased to be the co-lead organization, along with the Niagara County Office for the Aging, in this learning collaborative. This partnership will greatly improve the delivery of services to our area's aging population, provide a deeper look into the services they need, develop 'best practices' in delivering those services, and enhance their quality of life."

Both the Erie County Department of Senior Services and the Niagara County Office for the Aging provide a combination of direct and sub-contracted services, including an increasing portfolio of evidence-based health promotion programs such as the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program ("CDSMP") and Matter of Balance. Both organizations recognize the potential of health care reforms that promote integrated care and the importance of those reforms in meeting their traditional mandate to effectively coordinate services for older adults.

"This project will help us better position ourselves to be effective partners with formal health care," **said Erie County Commissioner of Senior Services Randall Hoak**. "We want to work with managed care organizations, hospitals, and physicians' groups to provide services that will reduce predictable hospital readmissions, delay nursing home placement, and help patients manage chronic conditions."

During the initiative's intensive educational phase, which runs from June – October 2013, local networks will participate in a nationwide learning collaborative that will share experiences (including lessons learned), innovative ideas, and best practices for providing integrated care in a variety of community settings. Local participants in the project include Catholic Charities of Buffalo; Community Concern of Western New York; the Dale Association, Inc.; DeGraff Adult Day Care; Health Association of Niagara County, Inc. ("HANCI"); Hearts and Hands Faith in Action; Meals on Wheels of Western New York; Schiller Park; Schofield Residence Adult Day Health Care Program; Town of Amherst Department of Senior Services; and Town of Hamburg Adult Day Care. Upon completion of this project these agencies, many with decades of service to our region's aging population, will serve as leaders in sharing lessons learned with other aging network partners. At the conclusion of the initiative, the collaborative will also share its models and other tools with a nationwide audience of communities and smaller agencies facing similar challenges.

Key support for the project is being provided by the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, which has funded community grants for many of the community-based organizations in the aging network and has shown a commitment to collaborative efforts as well, encouraging community partners to work beyond the confines of their own organizations to create new, integrated systems of support. "We are excited to partner with our local senior services departments and community-based agencies in this national learning collaborative," said Michael Weiner, President & CEO of the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County. "With this technical assistance, we believe that Erie and Niagara counties will be better positioned to work with health care providers to establish innovative service models where funds are invested more efficiently and effectively, resulting in better outcomes for older adults."

The Health Foundation of Western and Central New York is also expressing support for the project, and has recently agreed to provide funding to send representatives from the fourteen participant agencies to Louisville, Kentucky for an intensive two-day workshop hosted by the ACL. "This is an example of the synergy created when community partners think beyond geography, market share, and traditional roles," **added Commissioner Hoak.** "There is more to come. Bringing together these different organizations gives the small non-profit the resources of large foundations and government agencies, while the larger organizations and government agencies enjoy the unique perspective and direct service expertise of the smaller organizations. As a community we will learn from our national counterparts; what is working in Wisconsin, might serve us well here in Erie-Niagara."

For more information:

On the Erie County Department of Senior Services, visit http://www2.erie.gov/seniorservices/

On the Niagara County Office for the Aging, visit http://www.niagaracounty.com/aging/Home.aspx

On the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, visit http://www.uwbec.org/

On the Administration for Community Living, visit http://www.acl.gov/

On the Health Foundation for Western & Central New York, visit http://www.hfwcny.org